[Tashkent]

291 life, the dandy, these are found in the towns of Central Asia indeed as
363 much as in Europe; but there they do not move about the streets, but sit
369 about in the bazaar and especially in tea booths. The Central Asian dandies differ from their European colleagues, and indeed, not to their disadvantage, in several essential points. While the European dandies are distinguished by their walking sticks, short /167/ /Figure 59, p. 17a. Caption: Caravansa-y in Bukhara (after a photograph by G. Merzbacher)/ /168/ stockings and coats, high collars, small hats, heelless pointed shoes, and an orangutan-like bearing, their Central Asian colleagues are recognised by their proud and audacious bearing, their long boots with unbelievably high heels no thicker than a finger, short khalats, turbans or house caps set at an angle, and the flowers stuck behind their long ears.

363 Paving or macadamizing is of course out of the question for the streets
361 of Turkestan. The street bed consists simply of the ubiquitous loess, and is therefore covered in summer with dust half a foot deep, and in winter with mud a foot deep, which in the lower places collects in such masses that the horses sink in to their bellies and there can be no further thought of a pedestrian. Since the streets are primarily traveled by riding horses and wagon horses, and by camels, all of which are accustomed to following the foot prints of their predecessors, definite footprints have been formed in the streets, running across the road, which remind one vividly of a potato patch. Travel on such a street even in a carriage with springs is very uncomfortable, and, for the equipage itself, mortally dangerous, as one can easily imagine. Only the native, wide-tracked, two-wheeled wagon with its huge wheels is capable of passing along this bumpy road safely.

[491] In the towns, bridges are built only over those of the numerous brooks and canals with banks which are too high and steep to walk or ride over easily. Otherwise it is left to the pedestrian to get through the water as
[492] best he can. This is based on the fact that in Turkestan every halfway respectable person, man, woman and child is mounted and only the poorest beggars and tramps go on foot; for these there is no pity if they must walk with bare feet through the ice cold water and the knee-deep mud, in the winter.

In Tashkent the streets in the Sart town are considerably better than in many other Central Asian towns, but even here the conditions are such, that among other things, once eleven women drowned in

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489 It has been said that this rich area has no communication with the world outside, and difficult communications within. It is true that the only sea-outlet is through the mouths of the Ob and the Yenisei; but with the recent re-opening of the Kara Sea route the northern river-ways have a great commercial value. This will especially be the case when, on the completion of the Ob–Arctic Ocean Railway, there will be no necessity to cross the Kara Sea with its dangerous straits.

Within this region the communication is carried on—

• 491 (*a*) By means of natural roads, of which there are some 109,000 versts in Siberia, and 58,000 versts in Russian Central Asia, not counting the secondary roads.

133 505 (*b*) By means of river-ways, in which especially Western Siberia is very well endowed. The basin of the River Ob alone is navigable for a distance of some 15,000 versts, while some 16,000 more is passable for floating. Turkestan, with its two chief rivers Syr-Daria and Amu-Daria, has much more limited river communications; Amu-Daria is navigable for a distance of some 1,400 versts, but for steam-ships only 800 versts. Syr-Daria could be made navigable for a distance of 1,200 versts, but at present the river is more important for irrigation purposes. The southern rivers are free from ice for about six months in the year, while the rivers north of the Altai Mountains are navigable from three to four months a year.

496 (*c*) The railway is, of course, the most important means of communication, and each new line causes a great industrial and social upheaval in the district. The Trans-Siberian has only a relative value, and much greater importance is attached to the southern line of the Trans-Siberian (Chelyabinsk–Omsk) and the new branches; the Altai (Novo-Nikolaevsk–Biisk–Semipalatinsk) and the Minusinsk (Achinsk–Minusinsk). The Central Asiatic (Krasnovodsk–Andijan), covering 2,368 versts, and the Tashkent Railway (Orenburg–Tashkent), covering some 1,756 versts, unite to some extent Russian Central Asia with Western Siberia. A line between Semipalatinsk and some point on the Tashkent Railway will be of enormous importance for the further development of Western Siberia,

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the Steppe country and Inner Turkestan, and would thus help the communications between the northern and southern part of this rich area, which so far is carried on partly by means of river-ways (Ob, Irtish), and chiefly above the old caravan route. Out of two most important old roads in Central Asia, the first one—Orenburg–Tashkent—was utilized for the Tashkent Railway; the second—Tashkent–Semipalatinsk—is awaiting the same fate. It is the most lively route along which the post, the passenger and goods traffic is carried on. It starts at Kabul-Sai (some 120 versts north of Tashkent), and passes through Chimkent, Aulieata, Pishnek, Viernyi, Kopal, and Sergiupol (the latter lies 272 versts south-east of Semipalatinsk). Branches of smaller roads connect this big route with Pjevalsk and Kulja.

The last plan of the old Russian administration was to connect European Russia with Turkestan by a second line parallel to the Tashkent line, i. e. along the River Amu-Daria.

Western Siberia has gained enormous experience during the present war. At the first stage of the war she was the chief storing-place for army supplies. After the Russian retreat many industries from Poland and Western Russia were transferred here owing to the abundance of coal and other cheap raw products in Western Siberia.

See:

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